

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 22, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to you today as strong supporters of efforts to protect threatened African elephants. We appreciate you reconsidering the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) decision to allow imports of African elephant trophies from Zimbabwe and Zambia and urge you to retain this ban going forward.

The African elephant has been listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act since 1978, and, unfortunately, populations have continued to decline. In 2014 FWS issued a rule to prevent further decline of the elephant —while also cracking down on wildlife trafficking—by banning the imports of African elephant trophies into the United States. We fear that lifting the ban will only encourage increased poaching, exacerbating the species decline and harming international conservation efforts, which we cannot afford.

We are concerned that a decision to overturn key elephant protections could further imperil the remaining elephant populations, as evidence shows the African elephant population is struggling to survive. According to the Great Elephant Census, African elephant populations have declined in Zambia by 90 percent since 1972. Similarly, Zimbabwe's African elephant population has declined by 6 percent in the past ten years and, near the Sebungwe region, the elephant population declined by 74 percent in the same time frame. Meanwhile, from 2010 to 2012 alone, an estimated 100,000 elephants were poached for their tusks. The trade in ivory remains as brisk today as in the past six years, with record numbers of large-scale ivory seizures reported in 2016.

Much like the trophy ban, the United States has enacted policies to reduce ivory trade in recent years in order to conserve the African elephant population, strengthen the U.S. economy, improve biodiversity in areas where poaching is common, and prevent illicit wildlife trafficking, which is tied to the funding of terror networks. An example is the Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt Wildlife Trafficking Act, which was signed into law last year. The United States is currently the second-largest consumer of ivory in the world and legal commercial ivory trades serve as a hub for wildlife trafficking activity.

It is imperative that we continue to lead conservation efforts that strengthen local communities and prohibit poaching. African elephants are treasured by people the world over. They are worth far more alive than dead, drawing millions of wildlife-watching tourists who contribute billions to local economies across the continent.

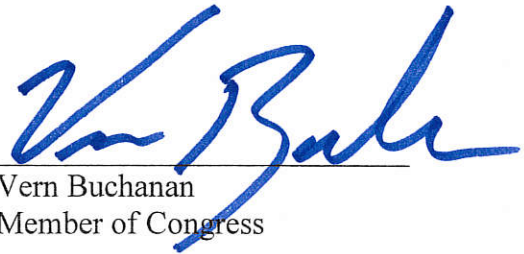
As Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle, we are in firm agreement that it is of the utmost importance to continue protections for threatened and endangered species both at home and abroad. Therefore, we strongly encourage you to retain the ban on the importation of African elephant trophies from Zimbabwe and Zambia.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



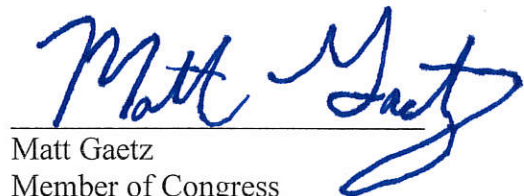
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Vern Buchanan
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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
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Mike Doyle

Mike Doyle
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Ann McLane Kuster
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Josh Gottheimer
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Thomas R. Suozzi
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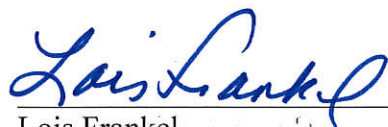
Ryan A. Costello
Member of Congress



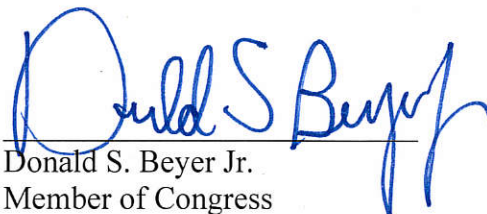
Denny Heck
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Charlie Crist
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Lois Frankel
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Donald S. Beyer Jr.
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Dave Reichert
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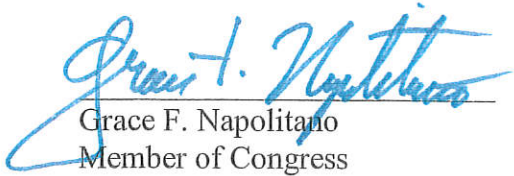
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Grace F. Napolitano
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Dave Brat
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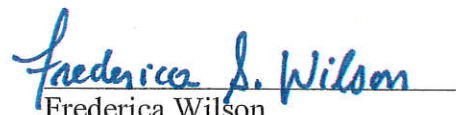

Betty McCollum
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Peter Welch
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Doris Matsui
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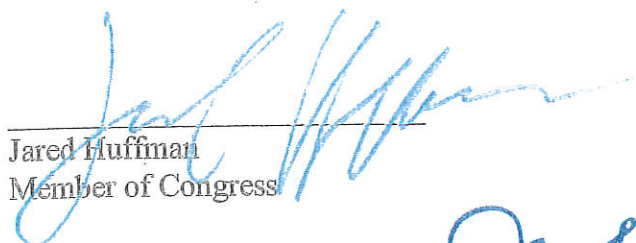

Albio Sires
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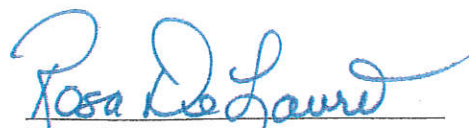

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Frederica Wilson
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Eddie Bernice Johnson
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Mike Bishop
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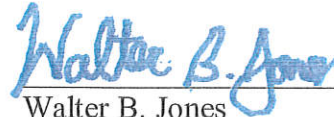

Jared Huffman
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Rosa DeLauro
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Jacky Rosen
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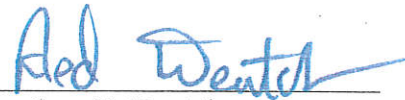
David N. Cicilline
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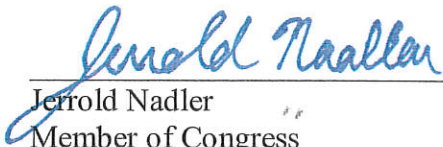
Walter B. Jones
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Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



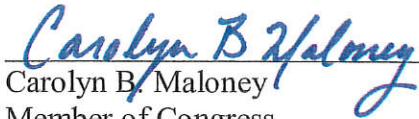
Theodore E. Deutch
Member of Congress



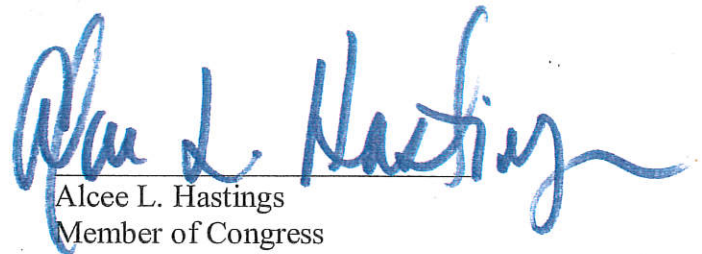
Jerrold Nadler
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Dina Titus
Member of Congress



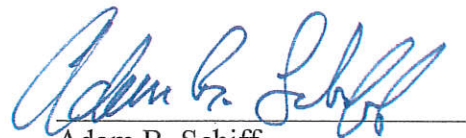
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Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress



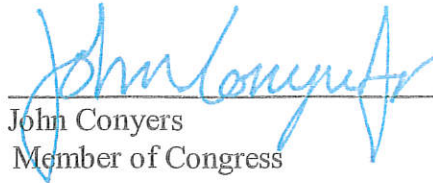
Carlos Curbelo
Member of Congress



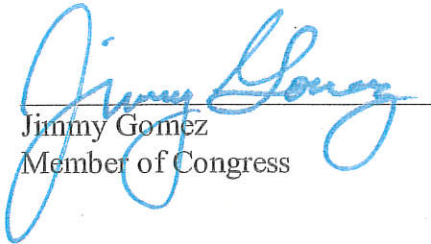
Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



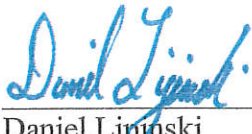
John Conyers
Member of Congress



Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress



Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress



Daniel Lipinski
Member of Congress



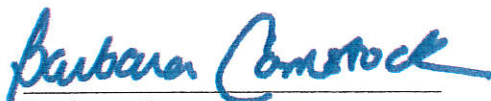
Kyrsten Sinema
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



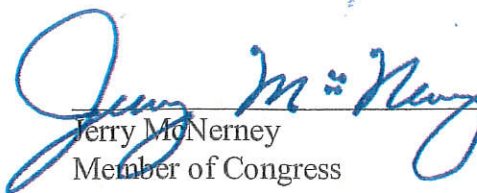
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress




Barbara Comstock
Member of Congress



Leonard Lance
Member of Congress



Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress



Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

Cc: The Honorable Ryan Zinke, Secretary of the Interior
The Honorable Jim Kurth, Acting Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Greg Sheehan, Deputy Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service